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The Centennial 1792

A Poem

WRITTEN ON THE CENTENARY OF

St. Mark's Church, Niagara, Ont.

1892

By THE REV. J. C. GARRETT.

To
Mr. Urquhart Colquhoun
With thanks & kind regards
Easter, 1895.

J. C. S.

Yours faithfully
Jno. C. Jarrett

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NIAGARA, ONT.,

BY

THE REV. J. C. GARRETT,

AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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Dedication.

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TO ALL WHO HAVE IN ANY WAY BEEN RELATED TO

Old St. Mark's,

WHEREVER FOUND TO-DAY,

THESE LINES ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

NIAGARA, June, 1892.

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE.

Hail! all hail! dear old St. Mark's!
We greet thee joyfully, and well
Upward thy praise. As sky-larks
Sing, o'er field and wooded dell,
Far up in heaven's own blue,
We, too, would sing thy fame,
And tell abroad thy name
Of worth and honor true.
Ring! ring! loud and merry bell!
And thou, great organ, thunder too!
Wide open every swell!
Join every voice anew,
Out on the morning air, to tell
Thy story true and well,
On this thy day Centennial!

The Centennial.

I.

O SACRED PILE! thine age thou bearest well!
Over Niagara's harbor, at Ontario's head,
Between Forts George and Mississaugua dread,
Through a full century thou hast stood sentinel.
Where, standing still, as beacon on a hill,
Far out from haven, thy square tower we view;
Above whose summit, higher rising still,
Waves in the breeze our flag—Red, White and Blue—

For churchmen true are loyal everywhere ;
Who to the State gave being, ever bear
Upon their hearts its interests with a will.
Nor can be loyalty, if in thy precincts fair
It be not found : to king and country true,
Our sires, than power, or fame, or glittering gold,
Honor esteemed, which must to country hold
Their sons and thine, and other loves dispel,
By ties of living and the bonds of dead.

II.

Grand old St. Mark's ! he treads on hallowed ground,
Who over thy gates' threshold sets his foot ;
For all around thy witnesses, though mute,
By life and death its sacredness profound
Proclaim. Blended in thee is found the dust

Of soldier brave and sailor bold, the wise,
Poet and patriot, priest and humbler just,
Waiting the day and call again to rise.
Rest they together in a peace most true,
In hidden spot or place more clear to view;
'Neath Christian sign, or heathen urn or crust
Of marble pale, which tastes of times devise,
That yet a coming time could never suit.
But yet what matters such, when loves entwine,
And rise beyond the shade of earthly sign,
And but the clay lies resting in the ground?

III.

If there be place within our earth's confines
Than other place more sacred, sweet and pure
(No other's more of love and honor sure,

How far soever we may stretch the lines),
It is this place, where, from turmoil secure,
Our simple praises rise an upward stream,
Till glows the heart as when the captives dream
Of lands where freedom's sun forever shines;
And when the heavenly mysteries are spread,
Age by the aged to God's board is led—
Most saintly men, whose earthly duty done,
Look towards the land of never-setting sun—
In verity, it makes thee sweetly seem
The gate of heaven and pathway to our Head;
While all around us lie, in peaceful sleep,
Our best beloved, who used with us to keep
Sad vigil and the joyful holy-day,
Whose souls o'er Jordan winged from us away,
That they some foretaste of that joy might reap,

REV. THOMAS CREEN.

Which we with them to share both hope and pray,
Sweetness itself thou art! Thy life in Him
We prove in prayer, in praise, and rite; though dim
Our view, our faith is clear, and brighter love.
Our prayer thus joined to solemn chant and hymn
In thee below, we rise to things above:
Our treasure there, though still our hearts are here;
Yet our affection is as sure on high;
For love of thee foreshadows as we move,
The coming love, for which we often sigh,
Which shall be ours, when we have victory won;
And from each face Himself shall wipe last tear—
The God so distant, yet in Christ more nigh
Than even thou, the fabric held so dear!

IV.

High on the bank, 'mid beauteous setting
Of feathery willow, chestnut-tree and pine,
By which the river flows, as if forgetting
Its leap sublime; its seething, swirling, fretting;
Its rush and roar, adown the steep decline,
Into the massy goblet, never quaffed,
Held in His hidden hand, Who made and lined
It of a russet hue, with gold unfined;
And yet around which demons must have laughed,
If helpless victim drawn adown its shaft
To them give joy, whose depths we cannot sound;
Within whose lips the water, bright blue-green,
With foam-flecked surface, as each age has seen,
Must wind and whirl, as demons had their spoon

Deep plunged therein, and stirred in turn from e'en
Till midnight, then to morn, anon to noon,
And yet to night again—repeating round
And round within its awful circle's bound;
Anon in sober majesty to flow,
In stately grandeur now its way to find
Into Ontario's arms, which round it twine,
As if, at length, embrace of mother sweet,
Returning child, after adventurous feat,
With welcome eager happily did greet ;
Of both the love and life—so it appears—
To make complete, and back on thee to throw
Their happiness, in such bright golden glow,
As rests on faces which have done with tears,
Thou hast been placed Centurion of years.

V.

Away down yonder, at thy feet below,
Where breezes raise the swell, and onward waft
Beyond the bar, where danger's stealthiest
Steps are taken to rob live's wealthiest,
On the lake's heaving bosom may be seen,
As if the folds of flowing robe between,
All hidden now, again each one appears,
Well manned by such as nothing know of fears—
The humblest ever are the healthiest—
The fisher-boats; beyond which farther far,
Curling from funnel of some steaming craft,
A feather wide diffused hangs far abaft
Where it ascends, to spread away behind
Horizonward, where now it melts to sheen,

A long grey streamer floating on the wind;
Or sailing ship, whose lance-like spar
The well-filled sail vibrating gladness bears—
"Heave, lads, ye ho!" shouts lustily each tar,
As on they speed the harbor sweet to find;
And thou dost watch them near and far away,
As still thou standest this Centennial Day.

VI.

These on the water. On the sandy beach,
With unprotected feet and pail and spade,
And dresses above knees to readier wade,
Near by and all the sandy shore along,
Their little ships securely held to sail,
The children play; while fishers mend their net
And reel it up, with whistling and gay song

To help. Where find more happy, gleeful throng?
Their cheeks like roses of a brownish shade,
Laid on a groundwork soft as peach's bloom,
And eyes like jewels in some setting pale,
Outflashing joy without a shade of gloom—
Roses and eyes are they, a prize to get!
And now their shouts and laughter our ears reach,
Of innocence, the joyful sound and speech;
In their sweet hearts for guile is yet no room;
A hundred years here passing, looking yet,
Continued, still is going on thy tale.

VII.

But landward look! See lying all around,
As with their fragrance all the air is fraught,
So sweet and peaceful on enchanted ground,

Peach-tree and vine, quince, plum and apricot,
Pear-tree and apple, all everywhere abound.
The early violet, late forget-me-not,
June rose and autumn, too; laburnum's gold,
Accacia purply fair, and other blow
Follow along, until the spring is old,
Of deeper hue or white as driven snow,
Bringing such thoughts as prove though it be cold,
Love ever lives, and needs but cherishing.
Amidst which standing, thou time-honored pile,
Thy life sublime still by them nourishing,
The pride of which to our cheeks brings a glow;
Inanimate indeed, yet living all the while,
As to and fro, in group and single file,
Men come and go, or swiftly or but slow;
And whither? Who can tell us? Who can know?

Living to-day—to-morrow perishing!
Yet still thou watchest the great river's flow!

VIII.

Still standest thou, and nigh as fresh and fair
As those who, blushing, came to thee as brides
Long years ago; and still thy grace we laud,
Though faded theirs. Scene of many a story
Within thy sacred precincts has been viewed:
In days of peace, ~~from~~ but worship, nought divides
From thy true use; yet did presumptuous dare
In day of war, in other nation's name,
To claim thy shelter, and to change thy use,
And desecrate surrounding tombs, nor shame
To feel. Fragrant thine aisles of flowers there strewed,
'Neath mourners' feet and feet of those who glory

Bore—a throng of youth, mature and hoary—
Who came, who went, who yet return no more,
Though ears in listening attitude have waited,
Are waiting still, to hear them as of yore,
Hoping they homeward travel though belated,
Again to get the greeting of fond love—
The greeting sweet to give them in return;
And eyes, too, strain out to the distance dim,
While prayer goes upward to the throne above;
For while life lasts the holy fire will burn
On love's high altar, and desire shall hymn
Each day its fondness forth, then upward turn,
In hopeful prayer, unto the ear of Him,
Who heareth ever, Whose best name is Love,
In Whom, though severed yet are all related.
Even now thy sacred walls and well-trod floor—

Holy to us because of those who trod
Thereon, who rest in peace to-day with God—
Re-echo still each footstep to our ear;
Re-echo, too, in tones the while subdued,
The lessons taught of truth and fortitude,
Which make the burdens that we still must bear
The easier borne; re-echo, too, the prayer
Common to us as to them in their day,
Whose influence lives, though they have passed away;
And principles, by which our sires imbued—
Like them to be, we well may hope and pray—
Made them, what now they ever shall appear,
Men that were MEN, whose bright, unsullied fame
Makes it our gladness to extol their name!
Yes, here they lived, and moved, and were endued
By that which only can be power—the fear

William McMurray D.D. D.C.L.
Archdeacon of Niagara

Of God—which them to Him, this land, their king,
As truth itself made true; whose honor ring
The future ages shall, and whose high praise,
So long as men have voice, the true shall sing;
Long as the sun on man shall shed his rays,
For them thy sons to God thanksgiving raise!

IX.

Thy holy priests—quaint Addison, sweet Creen;
McMurray honored sees thy present day—
Surrounded were, as stars in heaven are seen,
By lesser lights along the Milky-way.
Bravely they labored for the common good,
Nor unreproached of such as should sustain—
Saints live not here alone on angels' food;
On rougher fare is fed their nobler name.

The path of virtue is a path of pain;
Nor true is virtue where is never blame;
For blame is fostered by the vicious rude;
Nor lived the man who might no weakness claim,
Whatever height in grace he did attain.
My soul with theirs be joined, when, to the clay,
My body has been laid, like theirs, to rest!
Our dust, redeemed, at length shall waken blest,
And all made pure, as Christ doth make the heart,
To soul rejoin, as part to fitted part.
Death of this life, is but the crucial test—
The final proof of our triumphal faith
In Him, god-soul, Whose own thou surely art,
Who serve in life, and better prove in death.
They having proved His love's length, height; its breadth
And depth; the beatific vision seen;

Ended, and well, their holy ministry—
So well, thou art their monument, I ween!

X.

Thy youth renew, surrounded, as thou art,
By such a host as round thee sleeping lie!
Live still! connecting link for ages be,
Of those who live, those from the body free.
Alas! poor mortals, we in turn must die!
To-day lives none who saw thy welcome birth;
And who shall live thy final day to see?
End of thy work and all complete thy worth?
Live! teaching still to all that better part
In Him, Whose witness still thou dost abide;
And comfort sweet yet give to many a heart
Before it cross death's dark and narrow firth!

Continue, then, no matter what betide
The ministers who serve, in course, in thee!
Live on! for hearts their truest earthly home,
Until to heavenly home at length they come!
Chime thy sweet influence afar and nigh,
From thy pure centre, 'neath the heavenly dome!
Live, though men die—a standing proof still be
Of Catholic faith and Christian liberty!
Out to the world God's love in Christ still ring,
Until it echo from each mountain side!
Live, love and lift to every holy thing,
And ever prove the PALACE OF THE KING!